When children arrive at the foster carer’s home they are often confused, scared, and unsure of what will happen next. They don’t know what is expected of them in this strange home, or how to react to their new carers.

They may have experienced a very traumatic separation from their family, or some other traumatic event such as abuse or neglect leading to them being placed in care. They may be worried about their parents or brothers and sisters and feel that they are ‘betraying’ them by living with someone else. These experiences of both loss and abuse will affect the child’s behaviour in different ways.
Difficult behaviour is a common feature of many children in foster placements and this may be demanding for carers at times.

We always try to give our foster carers as much information as we can about the child’s background and difficulties prior to them being placed. Having an understanding of some of the experiences which many children may have had will help carers to work with the child towards feeling secure and safe again. Building trust will help them to grow in confidence and adjust to their situation. Our carers are all allocated a named worker who offers support and guidance on how to care for children placed in their family home.
Here are some examples of children and young people who require different types of foster placements in North Ayrshire;

NB. All the children's names and details have been changed to protect their identities.

**Children requiring a short-term placement until a plan is agreed for their future.** - Jade aged 9 and Jason aged 5

Jade and Jason currently live with their paternal aunt but she is finding it increasingly difficult to manage their care as she is a single parent with three children of her own. The children's mother and father are drug users and they have been assessed as being unable to care for their children due to issues of neglect and potential violence within the home. The children have three older siblings living elsewhere.

Jade is a quiet little girl who has been given too much responsibility for looking out for her younger brother and this has continued to be apparent whilst in her aunt's care. She is a very troubled child and this has led to her occasionally soiling herself. She is embarrassed when this happens and sometimes tries to cover this up by hiding her underwear. Recently, Jade has been aggressive towards her younger brother, by punching and kicking him when she is angry or upset.

Jason is a lively little boy who is inquisitive and chatty. He is very affectionate towards others, including strangers, which is concerning and could place him at risk of harm.

The plan is that the children should be placed together in a short-term placement and Jade should not have responsibility for the care of her brother.

The foster carers offering a home to this brother and sister will need to be physically active and have lots of energy, patience and commitment. As this is a very uncertain time for the children, the carers will be given lots of support and guidance to help them settle the children into some routine while plans are made for their future. If possible, the children will be rehabilitated back to their birth family but if this is not possible the children may require to be placed with a long-term foster family until they reach adult independence.

**Child requiring a long-term Fostering Xtra placement until he reaches independence.** - Calum aged 12.

Callum is currently living in a children's residential unit but he is very keen to live in a foster family. His mum died four years ago and although he sees his dad once a month, he understands that he cannot live with him again because of his dad's alcohol problems.

When he was at home, Calum was left to fend for himself for significant periods of time whilst his dad was drunk. He was physically abused by people who visited his house and because of this he finds it hard to trust adults or to follow rules. He can be quite challenging at times although this aggression has only ever been verbal. After this type of behaviour Callum will quite often take himself off to his room to calm down and staff have reported that they have heard him crying but he refuses to let them comfort him.

To try and introduce Callum gradually to his new fostering family, the move will take place in a planned way over a period of time. This will prepare him for the changes and may help him settle better.

The Fostering Xtra carers will require a significant amount of support in the early stages of this placement, and probably beyond. They will be experienced foster carers and have a good understanding of managing difficult behaviour. This Fostering Xtra carer will be supported to care for Callum until he is ready to live independently as a young adult.
Child affected by Autism and requiring a Shared Care placement to give her parents a break from their caring role. - Danny aged 8

Danny lives with his mum, dad and five year old brother Kyle. Danny was diagnosed with Autism at the age of seven and he has a developmental delay of around eighteen months with some communication difficulties. Kyle worries about his brother and gets upset if people stare at him in the street. He also worries about his mum because she sometimes looks really tired and sometimes she gets angry too.

Danny attends a mainstream school where he has excellent learning support assistants and a very supportive head teacher. If Danny is interested in something he will try really hard and he can now count to ten and recognise the letters in his own name. He knows the colours of the rainbow, the names of dinosaurs and how rain is formed too! However, he shows no interest in writing or drawing but prefers to spend time on the computer. Danny’s speech has improved, but it can still be a barrier for others, which can frustrate Danny. He finds it hard to make and keep friends at school and although he appears to be friends with everyone, in reality he does not have any friends. Danny’s dad is in the Army and he is away on duty for a great deal of time and the extended family live in England so they can’t offer any practical support either. Danny’s mum finds caring for the children emotionally and physically demanding and at times she feels at the end of her tether. Feeling exhausted and very low, she made an appointment with her GP who referred her to the Children and Families Disabilities Service. It was felt that getting regular respite would help her to care for her son. Following an assessment of his individual needs, Danny was matched with Donna, an IMPACCT carer. Introductions have begun to take place and the plan is that eventually Danny will spend every fourth weekend with Donna and her family in their home. This service may take some time to establish, as Danny does not react well to sudden changes in his routine. IMPACCT will work in partnership with Danny’s parents at a pace dictated by Danny himself to ensure the smoothest possible transition into respite.

The IMPACCT carer will be given practical support and guidance from her social worker and the other professionals involved with Danny. This support will include training on how to care for a child who has autism and additional needs.